MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

NUMBER 102 TOLEDO, OHIO JUNE, 1943

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON FRENCH, XV CENTURY
GIFT OF EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

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Art is that science whose laws applied to all things made by man make them most pleasing to the senses. *George W. Stevens*

EDITORIAL

War is wasteful.

It is said that the bombs dropped on Cologne in one night cost the British fifty million dollars.

We are seriously depleting our iron mines, our copper deposits, many of our other natural resources, to hurl their precious material at an impacable enemy.

The greatest of our resources, the minds of our children, we must not suffer to be depleted and wasted.

In the World War the Germans had but one casualty to two for the Allies. They husbanded their manpower so that they might the sooner regain strength to re-attack the rest of the world.

We must conserve our young people, not to later assault our enemies, but to rebuild a nation—perhaps a world—of peace, happiness and prosperity.

To that end now more than ever, all of the resources and efforts of home, church, school, library, and museum, are needed.

This museum has made one firm resolution. No matter how the war may constrain our efforts we will strive to maintain and improve our work in art and music for the children of Toledo.

Not even the turmoil and confusion incident to the waging of war should deprive their receptive minds of the stimulus of art, of the culture which is the accumulated treasure of the ages, and which we fight to protect.

A FRENCH PRIMITIVE ACQUIRED

TO JUDGE by existing examples, easel painting was practised in Italy two centuries before it was in France. This may not be so, for perhaps paintings now lost, but considerably antedating the earliest surviving works, may have been produced in France. There in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, architects and sculptors were executing some of the greatest monuments to man's artistic skill. The cathedrals did not offer the broad spaces for the work of the muralist which could be found in the churches in Italy. The French painter found his opportunity rather in the stained glass of the great windows or in the delicate illumination of manuscripts. It is conceivable that both glass and miniature painters, and architects and sculptors as well, essayed panel painting long before a nameless artist portrayed John the Good about 1360. Certainly this painting, and those subsequent to it, show a degree of technical skill that might indicate a long line of antecedents. They lack those crudities connoted by the word primitive.

The Toledo Museum has now secured as the gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, a panel which, due to its early date, falls within the group customarily known as French Primitives, as even do such thoroughly craftsmanlike and well-developed works as our Clouet and our Corneille de Lyon. Against a background of river and turreted walls, thought to represent the Castle of Tarascon, in Provence, our recent acquisition depicts the story of St. George and the Dragon.

According to the Golden Legend, completed largely from earlier writings about 1275, by Jacobus de Voragine, St. George was born in Cappadocia. A Christian knight, in his travels he came upon a city which was threatened by a dragon. To appease it the people had fed to it each day two sheep. The flocks being exhausted, they had then chosen by lot from the children of the town. When the king's daughter was drawn, though he was reluctant and protesting, she was arrayed as for her wedding and sent forth. St. George appeared, discovered her plight, wounded the dragon with his spear, and had the maiden bind her girdle about its neck and lead it into the town. The king and all the people saw the miracle and were baptized. St. George then decapitated the dragon, and refusing proffered rewards, went on his way. He was martyred by Dacian about the year 287.

Our representation of this story, one of the most popular of medieval art and literature, first appeared publicly at the Exhibition of French Primitives in Paris in 1904. (This, by the way,

was the art event which definitely established the importance of the early French painters.) It was then owned by H. Haro, a dealer, and was shown as the work of an unknown artist. It passed into the collection of the late Otto Kahn, and in 1927 was in the Exhibition of French Primitives at the Kleinberger Galleries, New York, as the work of Simon Marmion. In the Burlington House Exhibition of French Art, London, in 1932, and in the Masterpieces of French Art shown in Paris in 1937, it was listed as attributed to Simon Marmion in accordance with the custom of publishing the attributions furnished by the owners of works lent. It was again shown at the Masterpieces of Art Exhibition, New York, 1939, as Simon Marmion, lent by Dr. Preston P. Satterwhite, from whom the Toledo Museum secured it.

The attribution to Marmion was perhaps based largely upon the resemblance of the background of our painting to that of one of the panels in the St. Omer altarpiece. Although there is a similarity between the turreted ramparts in the St. George and those in the scene from the life of St. Bertin in the altarpiece, this does not seem sufficient reason for assigning both works to the same artist. There are variations in details from other works closely associated with Marmion which would argue against his authorship of the picture.

Similarities to works by artists of Provence, together with the presumed depiction of the Castle of Tarascon, suggest a connection with the south of France. On the other hand, the remarkable relationship in concept and composition to the St. George owned by Lady Evelyn Mason and variously attributed to Hubert van Eyck, Robert Campin, Roger van der Weyden and their followers, draws its apparent authorship back to the north.

At some time blisters have been inexpertly laid down and the whole panel has been imperfectly cleaned and revarnished. Perhaps a more careful cleaning would reveal qualities which would enable us to attach it to at least a related group of works. For the present we can only be sure that it is of French authorship, and, to judge from costumes, was probably painted about 1480. It thus becomes the earliest French painting in the Libbey collection, antedating the Clouet by some eighty years.

Unknown though its authorship may be, as is the case with many of the world's great works of art, and particularly those of the very early French school, its quality marks it as the product of a master. The respect in which it is held by the connoisseurs of the world has been attested by its inclusion in the important exhibitions above mentioned in Paris, London, and New York.

OUR SUMMER SHOW

A VISIT to the Museum's annual Summer Show of contemporary American paintings makes a pleasant interlude in these turbulent war days with the newspapers, radio and motion pictures bringing us realistic accounts of events in word and picture. Although works of the past year or two, there is no hint of war in these sixty-two pictures which portray the happier aspects of life in America. Peace and harmony characterize most of the paintings, whether they be scenes of daily life, portraits, landscapes or still life.

The beauties of our rich farm country, the out-of-doors at various seasons of the year, are the subjects chosen by William Dean Fausett, Furman Joseph Finck, Carl Hall, Georgina Klitgaard, Sidney Laufman, Herbert Meyer, Ogden M. Pleissner, Patsy Santo. The ever-popular child motif is wrought into a composition of outstanding charm by the brush of Gladys Rockmore Davis, whose colorful still life was a feature of last year's exhibition. Isaac Soyer's Child in Swing is another canvas using a child as its central figure, as is Waldo Peirce's painting of his wife and young daughter at the beach, titled Alzira and Anna. Doris Rosenthal is again represented with one of her Mexican scenes, Girls with Paletas, and our neighboring country is also the setting for Vaughn Flannery's Mexican Market.

An especially strong group of portraits are the works of such well-knowns as Alexander Brook, George Elmer Browne, John Carroll, Leon Kroll, John Koch, Eugene Speicher and Frederick Taubes.

Other painters represented in this, the thirtieth annual selected American painting exhibition are: Julien Binford, Lucile Blanch, Edith Blum, Louis Bouché, Robert Brackman, Charles Burchfield, C. K. Chatterton, Paul Lewis Clemens, Joseph De Martini, Guy Pene du Bois, Yvonne Pene du Bois, Stephen Etnier, Jerry Farnsworth, George Grosz, John Edward Heliker, Peter Hurd, Hilde Kayn, Molly Luce, Luigi Lucioni, Reginald Marsh, Antonio P. Martino, Giovanni Martini, Martyl (Suzanne Schweig), Henry E. Mattson, Henry Lee McFee, Robert Philipp, Edna Reindel, Louis Ritman, Suzanne Spitzer Robinson, Iver Rose, Andrée Ruellan, Paul Sample, Sarkis Sarkisian, Henry Schnakenberg, Zoltan Sepeshy, Albert B. Serwazi, John Sloan, Moses Soyer, Francis Speight, Carl Sprinchorn, Maurice Sterne, and Esther Williams.

The exhibition opened on Sunday, June 6, and will continue through August 29, permitting ample time for more than one visit and an opportunity to study the paintings at leisure.

BACCHANALIAN SCENE ANDREA MANTEGNA

SHOEMAKER FUND PURCHASE

TWO MANTEGNA ENGRAVINGS

THE Museum's print collection has recently been enriched by two engravings of importance. They are the works of Andrea Mantegna, one of the greatest fifteenth century painters of Italy and one of the earliest and most noted engravers.

Mantegna, born in 1431, trained in the school of Squarcione at Padua, settled at Mantua about 1459 where he remained until his death in 1506. Squarcione, his first teacher, was an antiquarian and in his shop Mantegna developed a strong admiration for the works and culture of Roman civilization. This love for the classical tradition is shown in many of his paintings and engravings whose subjects are derived from pagan mythology.

Outstanding examples of these engravings are the two Bacchanals, one of which, Bacchanalian Group with a Wine Press, is a Museum acquisition. It is the left half of a composition which forms an entity with the other, the Bacchanalian Group with Silenus. The sculpturesque figures are arranged with the formality of an architectural decoration, and the scene is embellished with classical motifs such as the acanthus leaf, conventionalized grape vines, and the cornucopia.

VIRGIN AND CHILD — ANDREA MANTEGNA

SHOEMAKER FUND PURCHASE

Equally prominent among Mantegna's works are Christian themes. The engraving of the Virgin and Child, now in the Museum's possession, is one of his most appealing. It is a superb expression of tenderness, the figure of the Virgin completely enveloping and shielding the Babe. The composition is formal in its outline, but details are delicately modelled. Traces of medievalism are evident in the drawing of the garment and its folds, but the developing naturalism of the period is proclaimed in the position of the Child.

Mantegna's engraving technique is that of a pen rather than a burin. The outlines are strongly marked with deep-cut lines, the shading used sparingly, consisting of lightly drawn parallels. It is a technique typical of Italian engraving but seldom seen elsewhere, and used most successfully by Mantegna and his Florentine contemporary, Pollaiuolo. Between these two men there is close relationship in their thorough study of anatomy and drawing of

the nude figure. They are also usually grouped together as geniuses who had a tremendous influence on contemporary and succeeding engravers. This is especially remarkable when one realizes that Pollaiuolo made only one print—the Battle of the Nudes—and that Mantegna is definitely credited with but seven.

Fine impressions of Mantegna's engravings are exceedingly rare. In fact, even inferior ones are eagerly sought by collectors. And so the Museum is especially fortunate to have secured impressions of excellent quality. The acquisition of the engravings, formerly in European private collections, was made possible by the Frederick B. and Kate L. Shoemaker Fund.

MUSEUM NEWS

The Museum is now sponsoring a radio program over WSPD each Sunday evening from six to six-thirty o'clock. The program features classic works from our record library. A. Beverly Barksdale, Supervisor of Music, and Cleomary Conté, Instructor in Music, alternate as commentators.

Service men are invited to listen to recordings on Sunday afternoons from two to six o'clock, at which time the record library is open only to them. Shirley Brown, who is in charge of the records, is giving her services as a contribution to the men in uniform in our city. Each week, since the inception of the scheme, the interest has increased. Frequently all of the equipment has been in use at the same time.

Kenneth H. Brockseker, Assistant Superintendent of Buildings, and James Hall, Museum printer, are leaving this month to join the Armed Services of our country.

For some time we have been hearing of a former Museum School student, now in the Army, who has been sending contributions to his public school to make possible for worthy students the Museum advantages which he himself once enjoyed. We have pursued the matter until we have ascertained the facts, which brought to light that the contributions came from our former student and, later, employee, Donald Conklin. He knew that the teachers of Marshall School, from which he had graduated, maintained a fund to provide supplies and even transportation for talented children who could not otherwise attend Museum classes and in a spirit of appreciation for what he had gained from the Museum School, he wished to help pass on the same privileges to other children.